



WEEKLY NEWS LETTER

THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE A. F. OF L., BY INSTRUCTION OF ST. LOUIS CONVENTION, DIRECTED THE OFFICERS AT HEADQUARTERS TO FURNISH A WEEKLY NEWS LETTER, FREE OF COST, TO ALL OFFICIAL LABOR PUBLICATIONS.

Containing a brief summary of important matters, affecting labor, occurring in the industrial, legislative and judicial fields, and such other information that will further the development and progress of the trade union movement.

No. 42.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR
HEADQUARTERS

801-809 G ST. N. W., WASHINGTON, D. C.
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LAW IS CONSTITUTIONAL

The Employers Liability Law, Enacted by Congress in 1906, is Declared A Good Law by the Highest Tribunal.

Washington, Jan. 20.—The constitutionality of the Employers' Liability Act, passed by Congress in 1906, has been upheld by the Supreme Court of the United States in all cases before it. The court also decided that state courts may enforce the act when local laws are appropriate. It will be remembered that the first law, that enacted in 1906, was declared unconstitutional in 1908 because it embraced within its terms a regulation of intrastate commerce as well as interstate. Immediately following another bill was introduced in Congress covering these defects and became a law. Two years later an amendment was added, known as the Bailey amendment, and then came litigation in order that a final decree might be had from the United States Supreme Court. In this decision the attempt of Congress to change the old common law rule, that an employee of a common carrier could not procure damages from the carrier for injuries received in his employment when the injuries resulted from the negligence of a fellow servant, has been successful. The decision of the court was unanimous. Justice Van Devanter asserted that Congress had the right to regulate the relation of interstate railroads to their employees, and further decided that Congress had not gone beyond its power by abrogating the common law rule that an employer was not liable for the injuries resulting to employees by the negligence of fellow servants: — "No one has a vested property right in the common law," said the Justice. No objection was found in the fact that the Act did away with the doctrine of "assumption of risk" by employees, and restricted the doctrine of "contributory negligence."

COAL MINERS IN SESSION

Indianapolis, Jan. 20.—The United Mine Workers are in session in this city. Many matters of importance, adjustment of the wage scale and the problem of the contracts expiring next spring in the anthracite field being considered. Numerous amendments to the constitution, it is said, will be proposed in order to make the organic law of the organization specific on certain points that interpretation can the more easily be made.

THREATEN TO STRIKE

Buenos Ayres, Jan. 20.—Argentina is threatened with a strike of railroad engineers and stokers.

GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP

Postmaster General Hitchcock Announces That He Will Recommend Government Purchase of Telegraph.

Washington, Jan. 20.—One of the things which the American Federation of Labor has advocated for many years has been government ownership of the telegraph. Some twenty odd years ago Senator M. P. Hill of Colorado introduced in the United States Senate what was then known as the postal telegraph bill. The senator was importuned to let his bill remain in committee and cease his activity in support of it. This he refused to do, although there apparently was no hope of its even being reported from the committee. Jay Gould was then at the height of his power and controlled the destiny of the telegraph business, and when Senator Hill became a candidate for re-election the Gould interests spent \$250,000 in Colorado and defeated the senator. Since that time there has been no well directed or earnest effort to pass legislation looking to taking over the telegraph business by the government. But now comes Postmaster General Hitchcock, without a word of warning, and announces that he proposes to recommend that the government acquire all the telegraph lines of the country and that they be operated in connection with the postoffice department. Various estimates have been placed upon the amount the government would be compelled to pay for the present equipment of the companies, ranging from \$250,000,000 to \$400,000,000. The postmaster general asserts that it is his opinion that great economies will result in the consolidation under the postoffice department of the mail and wire facilities, and that a substantial reduction in rates for telegrams would result. It is recalled that between the years 1844 and 1847 the government, under the authority of Congress, operated the first telegraph line in the United States. It is claimed that Congress has the necessary authority to act, as section 5267 of the revised statutes provides that the government may, for postal, military or other purposes, purchase telegraph lines operating in the United States at an appraised value. The newspapers assert that the recommendation of Hitchcock was made upon his own responsibility without consultation with the president or cabinet, and also that the president is not in favor of the proposal. This state of affairs will no doubt preclude the possibility of the recommendation now reaching Congress.

FAVORS PARCEL POST

Washington, Jan. 20.—That the establishment of parcels post delivery along rural mail routes should not be delayed longer is the opinion of Fourth Assistant Postmaster General De Graw, expressed in his annual report to Postmaster General Hitchcock. "Every consideration of practicability, business expediency and good administration favors the plan as being a probable source of large revenue and great public accommodation," he says. The recommendation is based on the ground that the expenditure for rural service is increasing more rapidly than the receipts, and the parcels post, it is claimed, will provide much additional revenue. There are at present more than 1,000,000 miles of rural mail routes. During the last year 577 routes were added, making the present total 41,656.

METAL POLISHERS SECURE INCREASE

Washington, Jan. 20.—The Metal Polishers and Buffers employed by the Crown Cork and Seal Company of Baltimore, Md. have obtained a substantial increase in wages which took effect January 13.

VICTORY FOR HATTERS

United States Supreme Court Hands Down an Important Decision in the Danbury Strike and Boycott Case.

Washington, Jan. 20.—The Supreme Court of the United States has rendered its decision in the famous case of the hatters. "Application for a writ of certiorari is denied on authorities cited," was the announcement made by the court, the chief justice of the court disposing of the latest phase in the case by that declaration. The effect of the decision is to affirm the judgment of the circuit court of appeals for the Second circuit that the members of a labor union cannot be held to answer for damages to property resulting from violence due to a strike and accompanying boycott, ordered by the officers of the union, unless it is proven that the members of the union actually participated in the acts of violence or authorized them, or had guilty knowledge of them.

NO COMPULSORY ARBITRATION

Washington, Jan. 20.—Rev. Pereira-Mendez of New York, president of the union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of the United States and Canada, recently wrote to President Taft suggesting that the time was ripe to commence agitation for compulsory arbitration. The American labor movement has expressed itself as opposed to compulsory arbitration, and it is not likely that any change will take place to modify its views. President Taft, in answer to the letter of the reverend gentleman, is reported to have replied: "Compulsory arbitration in industrial controversies is one which would have to be dealt with primarily by the states rather than the federal government. The principal field in which the federal government could act would be that of controversies between railroads and their employees, and a step has already been taken there by providing a mechanism for voluntary arbitration. It is doubtful whether any proposition for compulsory arbitration of these disputes would at this time meet with sufficient favor to bring such procedure within the realm of present possibilities."

DIRECT ELECTION OF SENATORS

Washington, Jan. 20.—It is quite likely that a compromise may be effected whereby congress will submit to the people an amendment to the federal constitution providing for direct election of United States senators by the people. Senator Clark of Wyoming, who heads the senate conferees, has submitted to the members of the conference a compromise, which is as follows: "The senate of the United States shall be composed of two senators from each state, elected by the people thereof, for six years, and each senator shall have one vote. The electors in each state shall have the qualifications requisite for electors of the most numerous branch of the state legislature." The compromise also proposes another amendment as follows: "The times, places and manner of holding elections for representatives shall be prescribed in each state by the legislature thereof, but the congress may at any time by law make or alter such regulations. The times, places and manner of holding elections for senators shall be prescribed in each state by the legislature thereof."

Plasterers of Portland, Me. have obtained increase in wages and Saturday half-holiday. The 8 hour day is enjoyed by all building trades in Portland.

TRUCE IN LOCKOUT

Manchester, Eng., Jan. 20.—As a result of a conference with Sir George Askwith of the board of trade and the cotton masters it is reported that the operators agreed to request the operatives to consent to a six months' truce on the non-unionist question pending negotiations looking to an adjustment. It is said that this action brings to an end the present lockout of 175,000 cotton mill operatives.

REYNOLDS' VIEW OF IT

London, Jan. 20.—Reynolds' newspaper, one of the most substantial and accurate publications in England, has this to say about the labor situation: "The new year has opened with a general unrest in the labor world, and the issues at stake are of national importance. Apart from a number of minor trade troubles there is the great lockout in the cotton trade. This involves the question of non-union labor. It seems outrageous that workers who do not share the cost of self-protection should have the impudence to work side by side with those who levy themselves to maintain a living wage, control the hours of work and abolish sweating. Yet we find this state of things not only in the cotton industry, but also amongst miners and in other trades. Non-unionists gain all the advantages won by organized workers, yet it does not cost them a single penny. The trade unionist, has, however, come to the conclusion that this is an impossible state of affairs. It must be stopped and the present struggle will clear the air."

RAILWAYMEN TO UNITE

London, Jan. 20.—There are about 180,000 members of the four railwaymen's unions, and there is a movement on foot to unite these organizations. Hitherto the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen have refused to follow the lead of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants and come into line with the other railway organizations. With the end in view of bringing about the amalgamation of these four bodies a conference is to be held at Salford on the 28th of this month, when a plan will be proposed that will provide for all members at the date of amalgamation to receive the same benefits for the same contributions, the executive committee of each union to remain in office for two years as a joint governing body.

SHIPYARDS TROUBLE

London, Jan. 20.—Dissatisfaction with the discharge note system has effected four Tyneside shipyards, two yards being rendered idle at Sunderland and threatens to involve the whole of the northeast coast, the Clyde and other parts of the country, as the point in dispute is one upon which the entire Federation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Trade Unions have laid down a definite principle and have undertaken to lend their united support in any dispute which takes place on this point. On the other hand, the employers have determined that men on discharge must take discharge notes, and on applying for employment must present them. In short, it is a system of espionage which the employers seem determined to maintain in order to allow them to follow men from shipyard to shipyard.

Bindery women of Raleigh, N. C. obtained 10 per cent increase in wages, without strike.

ENGLISH MINERS VOTE STRIKE

London, Jan. 20.--There is now no doubt as to the result of the ballot taken by the coal miners. Over two-thirds of the membership have signified their acquiescence in a national strike, but that fact does not necessarily mean that the strike will occur, as it is not intended that definite action shall be taken until the latter part of February, and the present prospects of an amicable agreement being reached are said to be favorable. The public, however, appears to be alarmed, and large orders are being given to the coal dealers, and as a result the coal operators have taken advantage of the present state of mind and advanced the price of coal at the mine tippie 50 cents per ton for the best domestic coal, while the retail dealers have increased the price to consumers 75 cents per ton. The admiralty also is storing large reserves of coal and orders have been issued to commanders of war vessels to economize and utilize oil fuel as much as possible.

PLUMBERS ANT STEAM FITTERS

Washington, Jan. 20.--As directed by the Atlanta Convention of the American Federation of Labor, the United Association of Plumbers and the International Association of Steam Fitters, through their representatives, have been in conference in Washington for the purpose of carrying out the spirit of the convention's action. No definit plans have yet been reached, but both parties in interest are confident that ere many months a plan will be evolved that will be acceptable to both organizations, and amalgamation result.

JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

Washington, Jan. 20.--The Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives are holding hearings on the Wilson Bill, which provides for a limitation of the injunction. President Gompers has appeared before the Committee and presented the views of the American Federation of Labor in reference to that subject. It is anticipated that the committee in the not distant future will report this bill out, together with the Clayton Contempt bill, both of which it is expected will be reported favorably.

CARPENTERS HOLDING CONFERENCES

Washington, Jan. 20.--Representatives of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and the Amalgamated Society have been in conference for a number of days endeavoring to reach some basis of amalgamation, suggested by the convention of the A. F. of L. recently held at Atlanta. Nothing of a definite character has as yet been given out, but both sides express themselves as being hopeful that a plan satisfactory to both sides will shortly be arrived at.

Brewery Workers of Virginia, Minn., obtained reduction in hours from ten to nine hours a day without strike. Tailors have increased their wages about 5 per cent since they organized.

BRUTAL TO CONVICTS

Washington, Jan. 20.—A special dispatch to the Washington Post from Wilmington, Del., says: Fastened to a post in the open air, with the mercury at zero, two prisoners received 60 lashes on their bare backs at the county workhouse. Both victims were negroes and had been convicted of highway robbery, the sum amounting to \$13 in money and a watch. The prisoners suffered greatly from the cold and the lashes.

DR. BLUE INSTALLED

Washington, Jan. 20.—Dr. Rupert Blue has been installed as surgeon general of the public health and the marine hospital service. The doctor's services in various parts of the country have been conspicuous for their effectiveness, especially in San Francisco during the outbreak of the bubonic plague, and also in other public health departments in the leading cities of the country.

TIME BILL APPROVED

Washington, Jan. 20.—The sub-committee of the committee on post-offices, which has had before it the bill introduced by Representative Reilly of Connecticut calling for an eight-hour day for letter carriers and clerks in first and second-class offices, has voted unanimously to report the bill favorably. The bill calls for the eight hours' service to be performed within the limit of ten hours. It is claimed that the work of the postoffice employees is now stretched over a period of much longer than ten hours, thereby making the eight-hour day a farce so far as the postoffice employees are concerned.

FOR LABOR COMMISSION

Washington, Jan. 20.—A delegation of sociologists waited on President Taft recently and urged him to create a labor commission, maintaining that an investigation should be made for the purpose of "gauging the break-down of our machinery of industrial government; the economic and social cause of strikes to employers, to workmen and to the public; to investigate rules and records of unions, and to examine the legal status of labor unions." Rabbi Stephen S. Wise of New York presented the petition to the president. Some of the questions presented follow: "We have yet to solve the problems of democracy in its industrial relationships, and to solve them along democratic lines. In order to arrive at the workers' point of view it is necessary to review the long list of occupational diseases, the failure of both employers and state to prevent them or mitigate their effects," and many other points well known to unionists and those interested in the progress of humanity.

WOMAN SUFFRAGE

Washington, Jan. 20.—When the vote is cast for the next presidential candidates four states will vote whether they will extend the right of suffrage to women. Nevada, Oregon, Wisconsin and Kansas will submit this question to the people. In all these states there is reported to be a favorable sentiment existing toward the extension of the ballot.

Union cigarmakers of Albion, Mich., have gained shorter workday.

WEST VIRGINIA MINERS

Charleston, W. Va., Jan. 20.—The twelfth annual convention of district No. 17, United Mine Workers, has just closed its sessions in this city. The referendum showed the following had been elected officers of the district for the ensuing term: President, Thomas Cairns; vice president, C. C. Griffith; secretary-treasurer, James E. Oraigo; international executive board member, Benjamin F. Morris. The convention adjourned to meet in joint conference with the operators in March.

AFTER LABOR LEGISLATION

Charleston, W. Va., Jan. 20.—The West Virginia State Federation of Labor is preparing to make a determined fight for labor legislation before the next session of the legislature. Secretary Snyder is preparing data to present to the coming convention relating to labor's legislative needs in the state. Local unions throughout the state are coming into the state federation, a general organizing campaign being in progress. The most successful year in the history of organized labor in West Virginia is predicted.

TWO NEW LABOR PAPERS

Washington, Jan. 20.—The labor press of the country is not only growing in influence, but during the past year many new publications have been launched. Sam Landers, for many years an official of the United Garment Workers and one of the chief and efficient field men of that organization, has just established the Labor News at Hamilton, Ontario, the first issue appearing on Jan. 5. Information has just been received that another paper is about to be published at Dayton, Ohio, to be named the Dayton Labor Journal, with D. A. James as editor.

DECLARED CONSTITUTIONAL

Washington, Jan. 20.—The constitutionality of the Ohio workingmen's compensation act was upheld by the Ohio supreme court in a decision rendered recently. The case has long been pending and arguments on both sides were submitted by some of the ablest lawyers in the country.

MUST NOT LOBBY

Washington, Jan. 20.—The clerks in the treasury department have been cautioned against trying in any manner whatsoever to influence legislation effecting themselves or the department in congress. The executive order prohibiting clerks of the government from leading or taking part in any political movement or exercising any activity in legislative lobbying has been reprinted and distributed in the department. The reprinting of this order was not occasioned by any specific incident, according to the officials of the department, but was done in the natural course of routine, as the order had never before been reprinted in the treasury department. The reprinting, however, is significant.

Retail Clerks of Peekskill, N. Y. have secured a reduction in hours, without strike.

FIGHTING HAND PRESSES

Washington, Jan. 20.—The senate committee on printing, of which Senator Smoot is chairman, is again at work on the bill for the codification and revision of the printing laws. This bill carries with it a provision, which, if enacted into law, will substitute power presses for the hand presses in the bureau of engraving and printing and elsewhere, and which is being opposed by numerous labor organizations, the latter maintaining that if power presses are substituted counterfeiting will be invited from the fact that the impression upon power presses have not as yet been perfected to the point where it equals the work done by hand.

BURNS RELEASED

Washington, Jan. 20.—News from Indianapolis says that Judge Anderson in the federal court held the proceedings against Detective Burns on the kidnapping charges in the Marion county criminal court to be void, and ordered the discharge of Burns, and issued an order that there be no further proceedings against him on the charges pending. The judge based his rulings on the ground that the Indiana law was a burden on the federal statute.

HUMAN LIVES AT \$718.18

Washington, Jan. 20.—It is stated that the prevailing price of human lives at Rockaway, N. J., the basis being arrived at by the Wharton Steel company settling with the families of eleven of the twelve men killed by drowning last October, is \$718.18. The men lost their lives at a mine belonging to the company, when a careless shot in a drift liberated an immense body of water in abandoned workings, drowning the victims. The workmen were Hungarians.

BEFORE LABOR COMMITTEE

Washington, Jan. 20.—The executive council of the American Federation of Labor appeared in a body before the labor committee of the House of Representatives recently. President Gompers spoke for the favorable reporting of the bill providing for the creation of a department of labor, with a cabinet officer at its head. He also advocated the passage of the bill designated to forbid enlisted musicians from accepting employment in competition with civilians.

BUILDING MODEL HOUSES

Budapest, Jan. 20.—Owing to congestion in the poorer quarters of this city the municipal government has been spending large sums of money in building model houses for workmen, there having been spent since 1909 approximately \$4,000,000, with 2639 lodgings having been completed, containing from one to three rooms each, with bath, closets, etc. It is proposed to spend \$3,000,000 more in the same manner. These lodgings are rented at \$60 to \$180 per year, an almost nominal sum compared with prices the workmen have been compelled to pay in the past.

The pavers and rammermen of New York City won an increase in wages after stoppage of work lasting a week.

CONVICT LABOR RUINOUS

Garment Factory Forced to Liquidate Its Business by Fierce Competition Imposed by Prison Contracts.

New York, Jan. 20.—The Daily Trade Record announces that the Frank-Kline-Stewart company of Baltimore, one of the largest concerns manufacturing shirts and overalls in the country, is liquidating, having found the pressure of competition from the prison contractors too much for it. It is stated that Mr. Stewart, a member of the above firm, appeared in Washington in 1910 at the hearing on the Gardner convict labor bill and advocated its passage. The firm referred to have had a pay roll of approximately \$500,000 a year. The closing down of the firm will throw out of work 500 young women. It is also stated that the manufacturers of overalls and workmen's shirts who do not use the union label are in a panic over the enormous development in the past year or so of prison made goods, indicating other liquidations will follow.

WARNING TO UNIONS

Washington, Jan. 20.—During the past year a number of items have appeared in the Weekly News Letter recounting instances where labor unions have been imposed upon by unscrupulous men gaining indorsements for advertising schemes, and in turn defrauding advertisers by securing payment in advance and then leaving the scene of their operations without carrying out their contracts. A letter has just been received from Savannah, Ga., in which it is related that an individual secured the indorsement from a local union to carry on an advertising scheme. The plan included a cut of the union labels, around which space was to be sold to friendly business men to display their ads. The advertisements were solicited, the money collected in advance, and then the fellow left the town without having the printing done, thus swindling a number of business men. It is claimed that the miscreant came from Memphis, Tenn. Unions should be extremely careful in giving indorsements until they are fully informed as to the character of the men desiring them, and the purpose for which these indorsements are secured should be closely scrutinized.

CALIFORNIA BUILDING TRADES

San Francisco, Jan. 20.—The annual convention of the State Building Trades has just closed one of its most successful conventions. In his annual report, Secretary-Treasurer O. A. Tveitmo, who, together with Anton Johannsen, organizer of the State Building Trades Council, has been indicted in connection with allegations made of conspiracy, said: "There will be no plea of guilty, because the men accused are not guilty, and they refuse to serve as stepping stones either for Mr. Fredericks, who has his eye on the governor's chair, or for Mr. Lawler's judgeship or for Mr. Hearst's presidency. Union men and women believe that murder is the most horrible of all crimes, and that the taking of human life, whether committed by individuals, society, state or nation, in an ordinary brawl, an industrial struggle or a so-called civilized war, is murder."

Laundry workers in Salt Lake City, Utah, obtained slight increase in wages. Barbers reduced workday by one hour less on Saturdays, without reduction in wages, and without strike.

AMENDMENT CHILD LABOR LAW

Washington, Jan. 20.—Congressman Roberts of Nevada, one of the labor group in congress, has introduced a bill amending the present child labor law of the District of Columbia. The present law fixes the minimum age of those employed in the messenger service at 16 years. The bill referred to provides that persons employed as messengers between 9 p. m. and 6 a. m. must be 21 years of age. The commissioners of the district are not in harmony with this bill, and propose that an amendment be passed forbidding children to sell merchandise and newspapers on the streets after 8:30 p. m., the present law permitting this to be done until 10 p. m. It is likely that an amendment will be passed by the present congress correcting the defects in the present law.

SHERWOOD PENSION BILL

Washington, Jan. 20.—The Sherwood pension bill, which carries with it a heavy increase in pensions to the old and disabled soldiers of the country, and which has passed the house of representatives, will come up before the pensions committee in the senate at an early date. There is some opposition in the senate, but it is predicted that the bill will receive the sanction of the upper branch finally. The author of the bill, Representative Sherwood, is a member of the Toledo, O. Typographical union, and is an honored member of the labor group in congress.

TRYING TO BREAK STRIKE

Chicago, Jan. 20.—It is reported from the headquarters of the machinists that a certain member of that organization has been endeavoring to discourage the members of that organization now on strike on the Illinois Central. A cleverly worded circular has been dropped here and there and specious personal arguments used with the end in view of creating a break in the ranks of the strikers. A circular has also been issued by the International Association of Machinists to the members on strike on the road referred to in which this instance is called attention to. Notwithstanding the efforts made to discourage the men it is stated that they are stronger in their position than at any time since the strike, the motive power of the road being in extremely bad shape owing in great measure to the severe weather of the last few weeks.

CONTRACTS LET

Washington, Jan. 20.—The ordnance bureau of the war department has just let a contract for 200 limbers for three-inch guns. The value of this contract is \$675,000. The British-American company secured a contract for 100 caissons for three-inch guns for \$275,000. Both these contracts go to concerns that antagonize organized labor, and in which the ten-hour day is the rule. The United States government has millions invested in the Rock Island (Ill.) and the Watervleit (N. Y.) arsenals, equipped with the most modern machinery, and where this work could, if desired, be done.

SCHOOL POPULATION

Washington, Jan. 20.—Fletcher B. Dresslar of the federal bureau of education reports that the school population has increased 15 per cent during the last ten years.